

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH  
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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting  
December 3, 2004

Members:

James Allen  
Meredith Andreucci  
Hon. Vince Anello  
G. Michael Brown  
Drew Cerza  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. William Davignon  
Hon. Albert DeBenedetti  
Tim Doolittle  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Matthew Enstice  
Samuel Ferraro  
Richard Geiger  
Celeste Lawson  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Hal Morse  
Hon. Sean O'Connor  
Dr. Gary Praetzel  
F. Tim Reese  
David Rosenwasser  
Laurence Rubin  
Diane Ruzala  
Laura St. Pierre  
Hon. Mark Schroeder  
Hon. Demone Smith  
Hector Titus  
Timothy Wanamaker  
Charles Webb  
Peter Wendel

**Present:** Burmaster, Weinstein, Andreucci, Anello, Davignon, Ellis, Geiger (proxy), Lehman, Meal, Morse (proxy), O'Connor, Praetzel, Reese, Rosenwasser, Ruzala (proxy), Titus, Webb (proxy), Wendel, Casale, Ross, Sheffer, Witul

**Excused:** Allen, Cerza, Enstice, Ferraro, McMahon, St. Pierre, Holt

**Absent:** Brown, Cusack, DeBenedetti, Doolittle, Lawson, Rubin, Schroeder, Smith, Wanamaker

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. The Co-Chairs thanked Niagara Falls Bridge Commission General Manager Thomas Garlock for hosting the meeting at the Commission's facility.

Garlock welcomed the group, and noted that ENRP Member Peter Wendel contacted him regarding hosting the meeting. Garlock noted that prior to this facility, for almost 60 years the Commission was located in the bridge head of the Rainbow Bridge in Ontario. In 1997 the decision was made to move, and construction took place over 14 months. They moved in to the new facility in July, 2004. Garlock concluded by inviting everyone to tour the facility after the meeting.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Hon. George Holt, Jr.  
Hon. William Ross  
John Sheffer, II  
Lawrence Witul

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of the October, 2004 meeting were approved. The Co-Chairs recognized two departing members, Ms. Jody Clark and Hon. Mark Schroeder. They congratulated Schroeder on his election to the New York State Assembly.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member Michael Casale gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth, [www.regionalframework.com](http://www.regionalframework.com). He noted that work continues, and a final product is expected in early 2005. ENRP Member Wright Ellis noted that the process is six months behind schedule.

Casale also updated the group on Power Relicensing, <http://niagara.nypa.gov> or [www.wnyrelicensing.com](http://www.wnyrelicensing.com) Settlement packages are being announced as the process moves forward. Co-Chair Weinstein commented that we must make sure the relicensing efforts are tied in to the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS). Regarding the Framework, ENRP Member Wright Ellis noted that the process is six months behind schedule.

Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus presented the Economic Development Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with approval granted to accept the Steering Committee's recommendation to contract with Conbrio to design and develop our small business assistance website. Titus credited the Steering Committee for all their hard work to date. Casale added that it has been a "great process." ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk thanked Erie County Legislators and ENRP Members Weinstein, Elise Cusack, and Al DeBenedetti for their financial contributions to the project.

Subcommittee Member Ellis presented the Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Ellis noted that we will have one more meeting to review the final economic development process presentation, then hold the forums perhaps in February, 2005.

Subcommittee Chair David Rosenwasser presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Rosenwasser called our signage efforts "a song without end," and called our lack of signage a major barrier to getting people to our attractions. He added that this is something Canada does well.

On the topic of tourist transportation, Wendel suggested that the transit should be in place for the summer and working up to that time would be building awareness of its launch. Rosenwasser replied that there are two issues; economics and the will to do it. We would need to find partners to invest in the system and need to see it as a multi-year project before you expect success. He added that we need to get beyond the parochial on this project.

David Lacki of the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (proxy for ENRP Member Richard Geiger) noted that when we did the previous tourist express the BNCVB marketed the service to hotels, but many of the hotels threw out the materials on the express

because they didn't want tourists leaving the immediate area. "How do you change the culture of that?" Lacki asked.

On signage, ENRP Member Meredith Andreucci explained that Niagara Falls is trying to make downtown more pedestrian friendly and are therefore doing wayfinding and trailblazing signage. There will be a public meeting on the proposal in January. She added that she would be happy to show ENRP the proposal as well. Wendel asked if there was still a problem with competing interests in Niagara Falls; Andreucci replied that it's not an issue as the proposal only covers downtown. ENRP Member Vincent Anello added that a lot of the parochialism stems from desperation at the local level; the State of New York hasn't been very friendly to us.

Adding to the conversation on parochialism, Ellis noted it's not just in Niagara Falls. For example, one local winery refuses to join the Niagara Wine Trail.

ENRP Member Maria Lehman offered some good news and some bad news on signage. The bad news is that the state wouldn't allow Greycliff to put up directional signage. The county put the signs up, but now the state wants them down. The good news is that progress has been made on signage along the shoreline trail as the MOU is being signed.

Referencing all of the above topics, Co-Chair Burmaster asserted that the ENRP has helped to start to change the culture in the region.

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with approval granted for the development of the public transportation / jobs access policy.

James Morrell of the NFTA and Doug Struckel of GBNRTC presented the group with a PowerPoint detailing the public transportation / jobs access development, pilot, and suggested next steps for policy implementation. It should be noted that the pilot resulted in eight route or service implementations, with three more under evaluation. Already, there has been an improvement in people's ability to access jobs in emerging corridors.

The policy will consist of three components: Workforce Investment Board and Industrial Development Agencies; Workforce Development Groups; and Job Developer and Employment Counselors.

Procedures will be established with all three to ensure the success of the policy.

Morrell and Struckel detailed the next steps: continue to develop the policy; convene a meeting of the stakeholders; and use ENRP in the role of facilitator for oversight and to ensure continued dialogue. Kniazuk added that success will come from formalizing the policy and designating persons of responsibility at all the agencies who will carry out the policy. ENRP can be a periodic monitor of the process.

Lehman offered a big picture view of the policy – if we develop a model that works, there is fewer infrastructure changes needed. Also, increased use of public transportation could lead to a need for fewer parking spots being required.

Jo Nasoff of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (proxy for ENRP Member Charles Webb) said that she was “completely delighted to see this,” and noted that the ECIDA has been working with the NFTA for at least 10 years now. She added that the policy could easily establish a way to promptly share information and include transportation information in applications.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member John Sheffer (not yet retired as noted in previous minutes) presented an update on the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS). Over the course of November there has been a “dramatic change in the picture” – everyone is now on the same page. Sheffer noted that the substance of the report has been done for nearly a year now, but that there has been a disagreement on implementation. Cluster-focused work completion was also an issue. Those issues, however, have been worked out. The ECIDA reached an agreement with their consultant on their work, and based on that we now know our role. There is also agreement on which clusters will be included. The cluster piece is scheduled to be completed in April, with that piece integrated into the existing work.

Sheffer also updated the group on the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative (BNCTI). The plan was recently vetted to the Western New York state delegation. Announcements will soon go out, and following that we will move from the strategic planning to the implementation phase.

Kniazuk asked the group to think of priorities for ENRP in 2005 and to e-mail him any ideas.

There was no old or new business.

Co-Chair Burmaster thanked the group for all their efforts during a very successful 2004. Co-Chair Weinstein seconded the sentiment. The meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m. for a tour of the Bridge Commission facility.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
March 25, 2005